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Rep. Honda's bill condemns violence against Sikhs in U.S.

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Saying he understands what it is like to be a target of racism, San Jose Rep. Mike Honda on Thursday introduced a resolution condemning violence against Sikh Americans in the aftermath of the World Trade Center and Pentagon bombings.

A Japanese-American, Honda spent his early years in an internment camp in Colorado. He and his family were among 120,000 Japanese-Americans relocated after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

"I am hopeful that with the voice of Congress, we can inform all those who would target their fellow Americans simply because of their appearance or faith, that acts of hatred and brutality will never stand and never be tolerated," said Honda, a Democrat.

In the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, Honda has urged the public to be tolerant and not pass judgment on people because of their appearance.

"For Japanese-Americans, the mention of Pearl Harbor has evoked a lot of very troubled moments," said John Tateishi, executive director of the Japanese American Citizens League.

The day after the attacks, the JACL issued a statement urging caution and calling for peace. The JACL also joined several other civil rights groups and community organizations at rallies across the country to urge solidarity.

The resolution introduced Thursday is a bipartisan measure whose co-author is Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Conn.

There are about 500,000 Sikh Americans in the United States. According to Honda, since Sept. 11 more than 2,000 Sikh Americans have been the target of attacks. In the most brutal attack, Balbir Singh Sodhi was shot to death in front of his business in Mesa, Ariz.

Sikh Americans strongly condemn the Sept. 11 violence, said Pritpal Singh of Fremont, coordinator of the American Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, which includes more than 50 Sikh Religious Centers throughout the country. "At a time when Sikh Americans most need to support those affected by the tragedy, they are burdened themselves with serious concern for their own safety."

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